

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO
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AMEMBASSY LISBON PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY KINGSTON PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTO DOMINGO 1513

EO 11652 GDS
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, DR, PEPR
SUB: VISIT OF SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL AND MARIO SOARES

REF: SANTO DOMINGO 1438

1. PORTUGUESE PRIME MINISTER SOARES AND HIS SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL (SI) ASSOCIATES DEPARTED SANTO DOMINGO MAR 19 FOR JAMAICA, LEAVING IN THEIR WAKE EVEN MORE POLITICAL CONFUSION THAN THAT WHICH USUALLY MARKS DOMINICAN NATIONAL ELECTIONS.

2. ALTHOUGH BILLING HIMSELF AS A MEMBER OF SI MISSION TO DEMONSTRATE SOLIDARITY WITH THE MAIN OPPOSITION PARTIDO REVOLUCIONARIO DOMINICANO (PRD) AND NOT HERE ON OFFICIAL VISIT, SOARES SOON FOUND HIMSELF, TO ALL APPEARANCES, AT TIMES, HAPPILY SWEEPED UP IN THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN, BOOSTING A VICTORY FOR HIS PRD HOSTS.

3. IN WHAT HAS BEEN THE MOST BIZARRE WEEKEND OF THIS
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POLITICAL CONTEST TO DATE, SOARES AND PARTY ARRIVED LAST FRIDAY AFTERNOON, MARCH 17 ABOARD WHAT WAS SAID TO BE PERSONAL AIRCRAFT OF MEXICAN PRESIDENT LOPEZ PORTILLO.

4. PERHAPS TO HIS SURPRISE, AWAITING HIM AT THE AIRPORT WAS NOT ONLY THE EXPECTED PRD WELCOMING COMMITTEE. THERE WERE PRESIDENT BALAGUER, HIS FULL CABINET, PART OF THE

CAPITAL'S DIPLOMATIC CORPS ROUNDED UP ON VERY SHORT NOTICE, A DOMINICAN ARMY'S HONOR GUARD BATTALION, AND A 21-GUN SALUTE FOR THE PORTUGUESE "CHIEF OF STATE".

5. IN CONFUSED SCENE AS SOARES DEBARKED FROM AIRCRAFT, BALAGUER AND HIS POLITICAL ASSOCIATES WERE EXCHANGING GREETINGS WITH THEIR ANCIENT POLITICAL OPPONENTS, WHO SEEMED AS DISCONCERTED AS THE VISITING PORTUGUESE LEADER.

6. APPARENTLY BALAGUER DECIDED AT LAST MINUTE--HE HAD COMPLAINED TO AMBASSADOR HURWITZ MARCH 15 (REFTEL) THAT HE HAD NOT BEEN ADVISED OF DETAILS OF PORTUGUESE LEADER'S VISIT--TO CAPTURE IT FOR HIS OWN POLITICAL PURPOSES.

7. IN A VERY REAL SENSE BALAGUER ACCOMPLISHED THIS. ONCE APPROPRIATE CEREMONIES HAD BEEN RENDERED AND AMENITIES EXCHANGED, SOARES FOUND HIMSELF ESCORTED, TOGETHER WITH PRD PRESIDENTIAL/VICE-PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES GUZAM AND MAJLUTA, AND A BRIGADIER GENERAL SERVING AS AIDE-DE-CAMP, TO BALAGUER'S PERSONAL LIMOUSINE.

8. BEFORE OTHER PRD LEADERS REALIZE IT, SOARES AND HIS MOTOR-CYCLE ESCORT TOOK OFF, LEAVING THEM BEHIND WITH THOUSANDS OF THEIR FOLLOWERS. SOARES WAS TAKEN TO HOTEL WHERE SI DELEGATION WAS BOOKED, LATER HELD PRESS CONFERENCE IN WHICH INTER-ALIA HE EXPRESSED HOPE FOR BROADENED COMMERCIAL TIES
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BETWEEN TWO COUNTRIES, AND AT 7:30 MET FOR HEAVILY-PUBLICIZED 35 MINUTES WITH BALAGUER IN NATIONAL PALACE. BALAGUER HAILED HIM AS MAN WHO SAVED PORTUGAL FROM CHAOS AND SOARES APPEARED TO RETURN COMPLIMENT, ALTHOUGH THIS WAS INAUDIBLE. SOARES WAS OVERHEARD TO TELL DOMINICAN PRESIDENT HE HAD NOT COME TO INTERVENE IN CURRENT POLITICAL CAMPAIGN. BALAGUER REPLIED THAT HE KNEW THAT BEFORE HAND.

9. VERY NEXT DAY, HOWEVER, FOUND SOARES IMMERSSED IN LOCAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN ON SIDE OF PRD. HE WAS TO LEAD A CARAVAN OF THOUSANDS OF PRD SUPPORTERS ON TOUR OF CAPITAL AND THEN GO ON TO SEVERAL LARGER CITIES IN NORTH FOR SIMILAR FETE. THE NORTHERN TOUR WAS CANCELLED BY GODR ON "SECURITY" GROUNDS, AND POLICE ALSO INITIALLY BLOCKED PLANNED TOUR OF SANTO DOMINGO.

10. AFTER TWO-HOUR DELAY WHILE PRD LEADERS NEGOTIATED WITH POLICE, CAVALCADE WAS ALLOWED TO COMMENCE. IT WAS STOP-AND-GO AFFAIR AS POLICE HALTED PARADE AT VARIOUS POINTS, AND DETOURED IT OFF ROUTE, STRUGGLED WITH CROWD WHICH GOT OUT OF HAND IN SOME PLACES AND BROKE UP AT LEAST ONE FIGHT WHICH APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN STARTED BY PRD MILITANTS. ACCORDING TO REPORTS

POLICE FIRED SHOTS IN AIR AND ARRESTED DOZENS OF PEOPLE, BEATING SOME IN THE FRACAS, WHILE ONE LOCALE OF CRUZADA DE AMOR WAS LEFT IN SHAMBLES BY PRD MILITANTS.

1. EVENING OF SATURDAY, MAR 18, WAS LONG ADVERTISED "ENCOUNTER" BETWEEN SI AND PRD. DINNER AND SPEECHES, ALL CARRIED OVER LIVE TV, WENT ON UNTIL 2AM SUNDAY AND WERE HIGHLIGHTED BY SOARES' PUBLICLY-STATED HOPE PRD WOULD WIN MAY 16 ELECTION AND PRD SECGEN PENA GOMEZ' WIND-UP OF AFFAIR, (WHICH BY THAT HOUR WAS PROBABLY WATCHED MORE CLOSELY BY GODR SECURITY AUTHORITIES, THAN BY PRD STALWARTS WITH FIERY ATTACK ON BALAGUER, MULTINATIONALS, 1965 US INTERVENTION, ETC.)

12. SUNDAY, MARCH 19, SOARES WENT TO AIRPORT TO BOARD
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PERSONAL AIRCRAFT OF VENEZUELAN PRESIDENT PEREZ, WHICH WAS TO FLY HIM TO JAMAICA, THENCE TO CARACAS. THERE HE FOUND BALAGUER, WHO DAY BEFORE IN CITY OF NAGUA HAD HEADED GOVERNMENT COUNTER-RALLY TO PRD SHOW, TO SEE HIM OFF PERSONALLY, AGAIN WITH CABINET, MILITARY SALUTES AND LIKE. WARM SALUTES WERE EXCHANGED ALL AROUND AND SOARES AND HIS PARTY FLEW OFF TO KINGSTON.

13. COMMENT: PRIME MINISTER SOARES DID NOT ESCAPE BASIC CONTRADICTION OF HIS VISIT-TO EXTEND SUPPORT AND SOLIDARITY TO THE PRD WHILE CLAIMING NOT TO HAVE INTERFERED IN DOMINICAN INTERNAL POLITICS. PRD UNDOUBTEDLY BENEFITED FROM VISIT. IT DID, AFTER ALL, DEMONSTRATE PARTY HAD IMPORTANT INTERNATIONAL FRIENDS WHO WILL BE OBSERVING COURSE OF DOMINICAN ELECTIONS. ALSO, PRD SUCCEEDED IN SHOWING SOMETHING WHICH IT HAS SOUGHT DESPERATELY TO PROVE, PARTICULARLY TO THE ARMED FORCES: THAT ITS MEMBERSHIP IN THE SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL PLACES PARTY IN SAME LEAGUE AS EUROPEAN DEMOCRATS AND NOT WITH COMMUNISTS, AS RIGHT-WING DETRACTORS HAVE MAINTAINED. THIRDLY, SI VISIT PROVIDED PRD WITH IMPORTANT MEDIA EVENT WHILE RALLYING LARGE CROWDS IN IMPRESSIVE SHOW OF POPULAR STRENGTH. HOWEVER, BOTH SOARES AND PRD PAID A PRICE FOR VISIT. THEY WERE FORCED, SOMEWHAT UNCOMFORTABLY, TO ACCEPT COMPROMISING EMBRACE OF BALAGUER AT ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE CEREMONIES. BY OPEN, EVEN BLATANT COLLABORATION OF SOARES AND SI IN POLITICAL ACTIVITIES TWO MONTHS BEFORE NATIONAL ELECTIONS, THEY OPENED THEMSELVES UP TO CHARGES OF INTERVENTIONISM: SUCH A CHARGE WAS LEVELED DIRECTLY AT SOARES IN PUBLIC STATEMENT BY POLITICALLY POWERFUL CHIEF OF POLICE, MGEN. NEIT NIVAR. THUS SI VISIT, WHICH BEGAN ON A NOTE OF PEACEFUL CORDIALITY THAT BROUGHT TOGETHER BOTH GOVERNMENT AND OPPOSITION TO
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WELCOME DELEGATION, QUICKLY VEERED OFF TO BECOME VEHICLE FOR
PARTISAN DIVISIVENESS. RESTRICTIVE MEASURES BY POLICE AND
CROWD VIOLENCE DURING CARAVAN ALSO MARRED VISIT.
HURWITCH

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